

Six-monthly bycatch action plan (BAP) progress report

MAC / Fishery: WTBF MAC / Western and Tuna and Billfish Fishery

BAP release date: 1 February 2004 Report date: March 2007

Issue: Protected species and ecological communities		
Strategy (1): Take all reasonable steps to ensure that species listed under Part 13 of the EPBC Act 1999 are not killed or injured as a result of fishing.		
Performance Indicator (output):	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
<p>1) The BAP elements of the fishery data plan identified within 6 months of the commencement of the BAP. The plan will include data collection requirements for protected species</p> <p>2). A set of actions developed within six months to reduce the killing and injury of protected species and implemented where appropriate</p>	<p>WTBF Data Plan in place.</p> <p>WTBF MAC and RAG currently commenting on draft AL06 logbook</p> <p>The mitigation requirements under the Seabird TAP (18 July 2006) are largely unchanged for the WTBF.</p> <p>One reported (logbook) interaction with a sea turtle for the period 1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007.</p> <p>Ongoing monitoring of the wire trace ban (reduces to very low any risk from the fishery to grey nurse sharks and white sharks).</p> <p>A copy of the BRS Report on catch variations associated with wire and nylon leaders in Area E will be distributed to the MAC and RAG for information once finalised.</p> <p>Executive officer and the Principal Investigator of the FRDC 2003/016 will report on avoidance and technology to reduce depredation from longlines by toothed whales including an overview of predation mitigation devices around longlines to MAC 29.</p>	<p>Yes – plan in place</p> <p>MAC 28 briefed on MOU with DEW and the associated requirements for reporting protected species interactions.</p> <p>Observer data collected between April 2003 and June 2006 indicated:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seabird interactions at a rate of 0.055 per 1000 hooks (0.032 non-fatal, 0.023 fatal). All were flesh-footed shearwaters and the non fatal were entanglements that occurred during hauling. 2. Eleven interactions with sea turtles - all of which were released alive. 3. One interaction with an Australian sea lion which was released in an alive and vigorous condition. 4. No interactions with protected shark species <p>Overall Yes –actions considered appropriate for the current scale of the fishery</p>
<p>3) Strategic research plans developed with actions to reduce the killing and injury of protected species</p>	<p>MAC to finalise 5 Year Strategic Research Plan.</p>	<p>No - MAC 28 agreed that the 5 Year Strategic Research Plan needed to be reviewed in the context of the Ministerial Direction and finalisation of the Commonwealth Harvest Strategy Policy.</p>

Issue: Protected species and ecological communities / Strategy (1): Take all reasonable steps to ensure that species listed under Part 13 of the EPBC Act 1999 are not killed or injured as a result of fishing cont...

Performance Indicator (output):	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
<p>4) MAC assessment of the range of species caught, level of interactions and effectiveness of management arrangements</p> <p>5) Efficacy of the industry codes of practice (CoP) assessed and reported by MAC.</p> <p>6) ERA completed and management arrangements for high risk species in place.</p> <p>7) A communication strategy developed and implementation progressed.</p>	<p>Every MAC reviews interactions with protected species (logbook) as reported in the previous quarter(s).</p> <p>In the last 12 months this has been augmented by regular reports from BRS on observed interactions in the pilot observer program.</p> <p>To date the level of seabird and sea turtle interactions has been relatively low – and were not identified as high risk in the ERA.</p> <p>MAC reviewed the industry CoP in 2006 and recommended that the following updates were required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Editorial – changes in the names of Government agencies and the industry association. • The inclusion of information on resource sharing arrangements. • Note the change in Commonwealth legislation which now clarifies the landing of striped marlin. • Review the CoP with regard to the 2006 Seabird TAP mitigation prescription. • Recognise improvements in line cutters and to promote the preferred design. <p>SeaNet monitoring de-hooker usage by longline crew.</p> <p>The RAG and WTBF MAC 28 provided formal comments on the ERA final report in August 2006. Additional follow up comments provided out of session in September 2006.</p> <p>MAC 26 reviewed the draft communication policy prepared by AFMA and, noting the difficult economic circumstances facing industry, recommended that only the mandatory requirements be supported.</p>	<p>Yes – MAC 28 reviewed fishery status although not in as much detail as normal because fewer than five longline vessels were active over the summary period.</p> <p>Final report on the pilot observer program from BRS to be reviewed by MAC 29.</p> <p>In part - Industry CoP not amended as of March 2007.</p> <p>Executive officer to follow up with SeaNet – report on progress to the MAC 29.</p> <p>Yes - SeaNet report many longline crews (both fisheries) regard the de-hooker and line cutters as an important part of the deck gear. Utility of these devices and implications for survivorship to be raised at the Bycatch Discard Working Group Meeting June 2007.</p> <p>Yes – AFMA advises that the WTBF ERA Report is expected by 30 June 2007.</p> <p>Yes</p>

Issue: Protected species and ecological communities / Strategy (1): Take all reasonable steps to ensure that species listed under Part 13 of the EPBC Act 1999 are not killed or injured as a result of fishing cont...

Performance Indicator (output):	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
<p>8). Actions addressing fishery interactions reviewed by MAC</p> <p>9). Monitoring and reporting procedures in place to ensure that there are minimal fishery interactions with protected species.</p> <p>10). The compliance plan reviewed to determine achieved compliance and appropriateness of program objectives.</p>	<p>MAC 28 reviewed fishery interactions.</p> <p>AFMA reports on interactions with seabirds to AAD.</p> <p>MAC 27 reviewed and provided comments on the draft compliance risk assessment and plan for the WTBF.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes - AFMA's MOU with DEW (new arrangements for reporting interactions with protected species) in place.</p> <p>Yes – suggestions made in regard to monitoring of seabird mitigation measures</p>
<p>Desired outcome: All reasonable steps taken to minimise injury and deaths of species listed under Part 13 of the EPBC Act 1999.</p>		
<p>Outcome achieved? - Yes - All reasonable steps taken to minimise injury and deaths of species listed under Part 13 of the EPBC Act 1999.</p> <p>Improved tori lines are now in place on active vessels and SeaNet reports that de-hookers and line cutters are now an important tool for hauling crews on WTBF longline vessels.</p> <p>Editorial updates to the Industry CoP still outstanding.</p> <p>Five Year Strategic Research Plan still at working draft status.</p>		

Issue: High risk and other bycatch species		
Strategy (2) : Take all reasonable steps to reduce the bycatch of high risk and other species		
Performance Indicator (output):	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
<p>1. Develop and implement management strategies for species identified as high risk from the ERA process</p> <p>2. The BAP elements of the Data Plan will be identified within six months and includes data collection requirements for all bycatch species</p> <p>3. Strategic research plans developed which focus on high risk species</p>	<p>RAG and MAC awaiting final ERA.</p> <p>The MAC notes that the current 20 shark per trip limit in the AFZ, a ban on wire traces and a ban on landing fins without trunks is already highly precautionary.</p> <p>Pilot observer program indicates that a high proportion of dusky sharks are released alive.</p> <p>MAC 27 noted industry willingness to support zero trip limits for shark species - targeted in state fisheries.</p> <p>Underway – RAG and MAC review logbook and pilot observer program data at each meeting.</p> <p>No specific plan – MAC regards current impact of fishery as low and has noted industry’s willingness to adopt zero catch limits on dusky and sandbar sharks, which state stock assessments suggest are over fished.</p>	<p>In part. Final ERA expected 30 June 2007.</p> <p>AFMA implemented permit variations enabling higher bycatch limits for blue shark on high seas only trips in January 2007.</p> <p>SeaNet has received positive feedback from industry and observers about the utility of de-hookers and line cutters when releasing live sharks.</p> <p>Not yet adopted in permit conditions</p> <p>Yes – last reviewed in session by MAC 28.</p> <p>No – not appropriate given lack of specific risk assessment on Indian Ocean shark stocks.</p>
<p>4. Jurisdictional arrangements addressed.</p>	<p>MAC now has OCS as a standing agenda item – key to better shark and bycatch management</p> <p>MAC notes its input into OCS matters (DAFF) is largely technical and is directed through the AFMA Board.</p> <p>WTBF MAC acknowledges the support of DAFF in providing briefings and sending officers to MAC meetings to keep the MAC updated on OCS and other policy matters.</p>	<p>DAFF reports that a provisional species list has been established in consultation with WA which sets out which oceanic species should come under Commonwealth jurisdiction.</p> <p>Commonwealth legislative amendments in place.</p> <p>MAC 28 noted that the backlog of material before the Western Australian Parliament will delay implementation of complementary legislation needed to support the Commonwealth led review of OCS arrangements.</p>

Issue: Protected species and ecological communities / Strategy (2): Take all reasonable steps to reduce the bycatch of high risk and other species **cont...**

Performance Indicator (output):	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
<p>5. Communication strategy developed and implementation progressed.</p> <p>6. Through monitoring and reporting ensure that accepted measures are in place to minimise fishery interactions with high-risk species.</p> <p>7. ERA completed and risks to all species characterised.</p>	<p>MAC believes this information is already reasonably well reported through MAC and RAG documents, ERA reports, pilot observer program public report and in the industry CoP.</p> <p>RAG and MAC awaiting final WTBF ERA Report which is expected to identify a lower number of high risk species than earlier iterations and simplify monitoring.</p> <p>Executive officer to work with industry and AFMA to restructure its logbook and observer data review papers so that ERA status was identified for each species.</p> <p>RAG and MAC have completed their input - awaiting final WTBF ERA.</p>	<p>Yes MAC 26 reviewed the draft communication policy prepared by AFMA and, noting the difficult economic circumstances facing industry, recommended that only the mandatory requirements be supported.</p> <p>In part –final ERA expected 30 June 2007.</p> <p>Partly - the low level of activity in late 2006/07 prevents release of detailed catch and effort information on a species by species level.</p> <p>Final ERA due 30 June 2007</p>

Desired outcome: Greater knowledge of and reduced bycatch of high risk and other species.

Outcome achieved? – Partly - the RAG and MAC have submitted their final feedback on the WTBF ERA to AFMA's Environment Policy Section (November 2006). CSIRO is expected to submit their final report by delivered by 30 June 2007.

The MAC expects the ERA will inform a residual risk process (AFMA and MACs) which will help prioritise data, research and management needs for bycatch species.

Current trip limits and gear restrictions (no wire traces) prevent targeting of sharks and observer data indicates that a very high proportion of most shark species are cut free in vigorous condition. The MAC notes that the timelines for passage of state legislation needed to complement amendments to the Commonwealth legislation will be adversely affected by the backlog before the Western Australian state parliament. The implementation of more contemporary OCS arrangements cannot take place until this legislation is passed. In this context short term changes can only be made following mutual agreement between the relevant Ministers. The MAC notes that the Western Australian Minister recently indicated that he does not support specific fixes to the current MOU seeking limited changes to some shark trip limits. In January 2007 AFMA implemented single jurisdiction arrangements which provide for higher retention rates of oceanic sharks on high seas only trips.

In regard to the longer term the MAC expects a transition away from trip limits to arrangements based on trigger catch limits, reference points and decision rules. The MAC expects the revised OCS (~2 to 3 years) will further assist jurisdictions develop and implement more contemporary management arrangements for byproduct and bycatch species.

The MAC notes that most of the common bycatch finfish species are not subject to fishing pressure by any other commercial sector in the AFZ portion of the WTBF.

Issue: Broader marine ecosystem		
Strategy (3): Take all reasonable steps to minimise the impact of the fishery on the broader marine ecosystem		
Performance Indicator (output):	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
<p>1. The BAP elements of a fishery data plan identified.</p> <p>2. Observer sampling regime for ecosystem research developed – component of data plan.</p> <p>3. Management recommendations progressed on results of ecological indicator project.</p> <p>4. Strategic research plans developed which focus on ecosystem research.</p>	<p>Data plan notes need for data and samples to inform trophic relationships and fishery impacts on ecologically related species.</p> <p>Pilot observer program – presently the collection of data for ecosystem research (stomach contents), stable isotope, archival tagging is minimal.</p> <p>There is presently no supporting research project or archiving/storage support.</p> <p>None – no ecological indicators identified</p> <p>MAC 27 asked research sub-committee to review the Draft 5 Year Strategic Research Plan in light of the Ministerial Direction.</p>	<p>Yes - WTBF Data Plan finalised– November 2005</p> <p>No – an improved understanding is expected from the CSIRO project 'Ecological effects of tuna and billfish longlining off eastern Australia', funded by FRDC</p> <p>No</p> <p>Five Year Strategic Research Plans at working draft status.</p>
<p>Desired outcome: Greater knowledge of and decreased impact on the broader marine ecosystem by the tuna fisheries.</p>		
<p>Outcome achieved? – No, however WTBF MAC's view is that this response should relate to a test of reasonableness and believe it would be premature to spend too much when there is a significant level of concern about the robustness of ecosystem modelling.</p> <p>The MAC believes that clearer advice is needed on what sort of data is needed to gain an insight on ecosystem impacts. The MAC suggests that a stepwise approach be adopted with a commitment to revisit the data collection system for ecosystem when activity in the fishery increases. The MAC noted that observer and logbook data characterises presence and abundance of most of the large components of the ecosystem.</p> <p>The MAC noted that the draft ERA considered that the fishery's impacts on demersal communities and inshore ecosystems were relatively slight.</p>		

Issue: Communication strategy		
Strategy (4): Communicating the Bycatch Action Plan to industry.		
Performance Indicator (output):	Actions taken for output	Output achieved (y/n) and date
1. Education and awareness programs on bycatch.	AFMA provided copies of the BAP to all permit holders in March 2004. BAP posted on AFMA's website. SeaNet planning to conduct sea turtle handling and release workshops when activity levels in the fishery rise.	Yes Seanet and Belldi Consultancy (FRDC supported) released their Sea Turtle DVD education kits in October 2006.
2. Industry extension.	SeaNet officers are active in the fishery despite low levels of effort promoting industry code of conduct and coordinating the liaison work on seabirds and sea turtles in the ETBF and WTBF.	Yes
Desired outcome: Increased industry awareness about BAPs, their objectives and actions as well as increased awareness about the impact fisheries have on the ecosystem and how to minimise this impact.		
Outcome achieved? – In part – there is some uncertainty amongst industry and stakeholders about the relationship between the Ministerial Direction (as it applies to bycatch), the 2006 draft AFMA policy on Bycatch and Discarding, the BAP and Industry Code of Conduct (bycatch sections).		